



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Field Office

PO Box 460

Cedarville, CA 96104

www.ca.blm.gov/surprise



August 28, 2013

Executive Summary:

Massacre Lakes Allotment and Wild Horse Herd Management Area Environmental Assessment: Livestock Grazing Authorization and Wild Horse Appropriate Management Level Establishment

The Surprise Field Office is seeking public comment on an Environmental Assessment (EA) for renewal of a livestock grazing permit for the Massacre Lakes Allotment and establishing Appropriate Management Levels (AML) for wild horses within the Massacre Lakes Herd Management Area (HMA). The Allotment and HMA are located in northern Washoe County, Nevada and contain approximately 44,480 acres of public and 2,410 acres of private land. The HMA is entirely within the Allotment and contain 39,888 acres of public land. The EA has been prepared to consider the environmental impacts of resulting from grazing livestock and wild horses at various levels.

The EA is needed because the existing livestock grazing permit has expired, no AML has been established for wild horses using currently approved procedures, and a recent assessment of rangeland health standards for the allotment revealed that health standards are not being met and grazing by livestock and wild horses are a contributing factor.

The EA considers five alternatives including three action alternatives, the Continue Present Management alternative and a no grazing (by cattle or wild horse) alternative. The Proposed Action was developed by the Surprise Field Office multi-resource staff to respond to issues raised by the public and other agencies during scoping and would reduce livestock use by 132 head and decrease the season of use by approximately 1.5 months (a 47% reduction) and establish a wild horse AML of 25-45 animals. The other action alternatives include an alternative developed by a Technical Review Team initiated by the Modoc-Washoe Experimental Stewardship Committee that would not change season of use or cattle numbers, but would require that the livestock grazing permittee not exceed 40% utilization on key species and monitor his use and move cattle to meet that requirement. The final action alternative was submitted by wild horse activists and would eliminate all cattle use from the Juniper Pasture and allocate all forage in that pasture to wild horses with an AML of 100 to 121. The submitted proposal also called for limiting removal of wild horses exceeding AML through bait or water trapping of "family bands" in conjunction with a scientific study of this removal technique creating "self-regulation" of wild horse populations. This part of the submitted proposal is presented as a possibility because no academically based researched has been found willing to conduct the necessary studies. The allotment contains five pastures, four of which contain past seeding and sagebrush removal projects to improve livestock forage. The fifth pasture, the Juniper Pasture which

is the largest pasture and is the primary use area for wild horses contains most of the greater sage-grouse nesting and brooding habitat, important archaeological resources and most of the riparian habitat within the allotment.

The current permit for 3,210 AUMs of cattle use (582 head) is expired. The current population of wild horses is estimated to at 186 head. The 2008 Surprise RMP estimated an Appropriate Management Level (AML) of 23-35 horses.

Additionally the Allotment includes elements of the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) including 31,080 acres of Massacre Rim WSA (78% of HMA is within WSA and all of the WSA within the allotment also designated as ACEC for cultural and wildlife resources) and 3,815 acres of allotment (none of HMA) is within Black Rock-High Rock NCA.

The comment period is 30 days and closes September 27, 2013. Written comments should be addressed to Field Manager Tim Burke at:

Surprise Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
PO Box 460
Cedarville, CA 96104

or emailed to: casrpubcom@blm.gov